

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3014

INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PARAMARIBO 1043

KINGSTON FOR AMBASSADOR GERARD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, NS

SUBJ: SURINAM: INDEPENDENCE PLUS ONE YEAR

SUMMARY: AS SURINAM CELEBRATES ITS FIRST YEAR OF INDEPENDENCE, THE GOS CONTINUES TO STRIVE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL IDENTITY AND FOR A DEFINITION OF SURINAM'S ROLE IN THE WORLD. THERE ARE MANY OBSTACLES TO THIS, BUT SURINAM ALSO POSSESSES IMPORTANT RESOURCES NOT ALWAYS AVAILABLE TO MOST NEW NATIONS. U.S. INTERESTS IN ENCOURAGING THE EFFECTIVE USE OF THESE RESOURCES AND THE CHARTING OF A MODERATE COURSE THROUGH INTERNATIONAL WATERS BY SURINAM CONTINUE TO JUSTIFY OUR LOW-KEY APPROACH OF GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE GOS AND SYMPATHETIC CONCERN FOR ITS DEMOCRATIC ASPIRATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT AIMS. END SUMMARY.

1. SURINAM WILL CELEBRATE ITS FIRST YEAR OF INDEPENDENCE NOVEMBER 25 EMPHASIZING THE THEME, "HERE IS MY CONTRIBUTION." CHOICE OF THIS SLOGAN BY GOS REFLECTS GOVERNMENT APPRECIATION THAT MOST IMPORTANT TASK IT FACES IS THE CREATION OF A SURINAM- ESE IDENTITY AND THE ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF ALL SURINAMERS IN THE
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DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY. IN THIS ENDEAVOR, GOS CAN DRAW ON

RESOURCES OF A LONG DEMOCRATIC TRADITION AND MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN SELF-GOVERNMENT IN ALL MATTERS EXCEPT FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE AS WELL AS THE LARGESS OF THE DEPARTING NETHERLANDERS WHO AGREED TO PROVIDE MORE THAN \$1.5 BILLION IN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE OVER THE NEXT TEN TO FIFTEEN YEARS.

2. GOS FACES A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT OBSTACLES IN THIS ENDEAVOR, HOWEVER, PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF HAS POINTED OUT THE AVERAGE SURINAMER'S LOVE OF PARTIES AS AN INDICATION OF HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO MOTIVATE THE POPULATION TO HARD WORK. BUT THE PROBLEM GOES DEEPER THAN THIS. THE DIVERSITY OF PEOPLES--CREOLES, HINDUSTANIS, JAVANESE, CHINESE, BUSH NEGROES, AMERINDIANS, AND EUROPEANS--WHICH MAKES UP THE POPULATION OF SURINAM MAKES IT NECESSARY TO FIND SOME VEHICLE FOR BRIDGING THE CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS, AND ETHNIC GAPS BETWEEN THESE GROUPS BEFORE THE NAME "SURINAMER" CAN HAVE REAL MEANING. IN MANY CASES FORCIBLY REMOVED FROM THEIR NATIVE LANDS AND COMPELLED TO SETTLE IN AN UNKNOWN, FAR-AWAY DUTCH COLONY, THESE GROUPS HAVE LEARNED TO LIVE AMONGST EACH OTHER, BUT THEY HAVE RETAINED MANY OF THE IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS WHICH SEPARATE THEM PSYCHOLOGICALLY AND SOCIALLY.

3. UNLIKE MANY NEWLY INDEPENDENT COUNTRIES, SURINAM DID NOT HAVE A LONG HISTORY OF AN INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE. HENCE, SURINAM HAS NO EXPERIENCE WITH THE FIERY NATIONALISM OR REVOLT AGAINST COLONIALISM WHICH HELPED FORM THE NATIONAL IDENTITIES OF SO MANY OTHER NEW NATIONS. THUS, JUST AS IT IS DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY ONESELF AS A SURINAMER, SO IS IT ALSO HARD TO SACRIFICE ONE'S PRIVATE INTERESTS FOR AN ABSTRACT "SURINAM."

4. THE PAST YEAR HAS BEEN MARKED BY STABILITY ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT. THE SAME COALITION CABINET UNDER PRIME MINISTER HENCK ARRON AND SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS WHO WERE IN OFFICE BEFORE INDEPENDENCE REMAIN IN CHARGE OF THE GOVERNMENT, WHICH THUS RETAINS ITS NEARLY COMPLETE CREOLE CAST. ALTHOUGH THE PRIME MINISTER'S CREDIBILITY WAS STRONGLY ATTACKED DURING JULY AND AUGUST WHEN ELECTIONS WERE NOT SCHEDULED (THE LARGELY HINDUSTANI OPPOSITION AND THE PRESS THOUGHT THEY HAD BEEN PROMISED WITHIN EIGHT MONTHS OF INDEPENDENCE), HE WEATHERED THE STORM AND THE CONFIDENTIAL

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QUESTION HAS VIRTUALLY DROPPED OUT OF PUBLIC DEBATE AMIDST A GENERAL EXPECTATION THAT ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD TOWARD THE END OF 1977 WHEN THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT'S FOUR-YEAR TERM EXPIRES.

5. ALTHOUGH THE COALITION GOVERNMENT'S HOLD ON PARLIAMENT IS ONLY BY A PRECARIOUS MAJORITY OF 20-18 WITH ONE INDEPENDENT MEMBER, IT HAS NEARLY COMPLETED THE PROCESS OF APPROVING ITS

FIRST POST-INDEPENDENCE BUDGET, HEAVILY ORIENTED TOWARD DEVELOPMENT. SO FAR, HOWEVER, PARLIAMENT HAS NOT HAD TO DEAL WITH ANY MAJOR NEW BILLS WHICH WOULD HAVE PROVIDED A STERNER TEST OF THE COALITION'S HOLD.

6. THE PAST YEAR WITNESSED LITTLE ECONOMIC PROGRESS IN SURINAM BUT PLENTY OF TALK ABOUT HER CONSIDERABLE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL. SURINAM BAUXITE RESERVES, AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST RESOURCES, AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FROM THE NETHERLANDS OFFER A BRIGHT PROMISE WHEN COUPLED WITH THE CURRENT ECONOMIC BASE ALREADY PRODUCING A PER CAPITAL GNP OF ABOUT \$900 PER YEAR. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOWEVER HOW THESE ADVANTAGES WILL BE UTILIZED OVER THE LONG HAUL; AND THERE ARE MAJOR OBSTACLES IN THE WAY, INCLUDING A SHORTAGE OF ESSENTIAL MANAGERIAL TALENT AND A WIDE-SPREAD AVERSION TO THE STRENOUS FIELD LABOR ASSOCIATED WITH OTHERWISE PROMISING AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES. FOREIGN INVESTMENT CONTINUES TO BE WELCOME IN THE INTERESTS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WITH JOINT VENTURES SEEMINGLY PREFERRED WHEN NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCES ARE INVOLVED.

7. JUST AS SURINAM HAS SOUGHT TO CREATE AN IDENTITY FOR ITS PEOPLE, IT HAS ALSO CAUTIOUSLY ENTERED THE ARENA OF WORLD AFFAIRS SEEKING TO DETERMINE IN WHICH OF THE MANY ESTABLISHED GROUPINGS OF NATIONS IT BELONGS. ON THE OCCASION OF HIS SPEECH TO THE 31ST GENERAL ASSEMBLY, PRIME MINISTER ARRON STRESSED SURINAM'S CONCEPT OF ITSELF AS A WESTERN HEMISPHERIC NATION DESIRING TO STRENGTHEN ITS RELATIONS WITH ITS IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORS, IN PARTICULAR BRAZIL AND VENEZUELA. SURINAM HAS ALSO SHOWN KEEN INTEREST IN DEVELOPMENTS IN THE U.S. AND VALUES OUR PRESENCE IN PARAMARIBO.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PARAMARIBO 1043

KINGSTON FOR AMBASSADOR GERARD

8. BUT MANY OF THE OLD TIES WITH THE MOTHER COUNTRY AND HER EUROPEAN NEIGHBORS HAVE NOT ENDED. ESTIMATES OF THE NUMBER OF SURINAMERS PRESENTLY LIVING IN THE NETHERLANDS RUN AS HIGH AS 120,000. FAMILY, LANGUAGE, AND CULTURAL TIES WILL CONTINUE TO BIND SURINAMERS TO THE NETHERLANDS WHILE THE ADMINISTRATION OF LARGE AMOUNTS OF DUTCH FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE WILL DICTATE A LARGE DUTCH ROLE IN SURINAM'S DEVELOPMENT PLANS. JOINING THE ACP COUNTRIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY THROUGH THE LOME CONVENTION IN JULY, SURINAM GAVE FURTHER TESTIMONY TO ITS POLICY OF RETAINING DIRECT AND MEANINGFUL CONTACTS WITH EUROPE WHILE EXPANDING ITS RELATIONS ELSEWHERE.

9. UNFORTUNATELY FOR SURINAM'S RELATIONS WITH GUYANA, THE COLONIAL HERITAGE OF AN UNSETTLED RIVER BORDER KEEPS ALIVE A POTENTIALLY TROUBLESOME INTERNATIONAL DISPUTE. BUT THERE IS MORE TO SURINAM'S WARINESS OF HER WESTERN NEIGHBOR THAN DISPUTED TERRITORY, AND THAT IS A CONCERN THAT GUYANESE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICIES WOULD MEAN DISASTER FOR SURINAM'S BASICALLY BOURGEOIS COMMUNITY. SURINAM IS TRULY A MIDDLE-CLASS COUNTRY AND MOST OF ITS POPULATION DO NOT VIEW RADICAL CHANGE AS HELPFUL TO
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THEIR PROSPERITY. SIMILARLY, SURINAM HAS BEEN WARY OF OVERTURES FROM MORE RADICAL GROUPS SUCH AS THE CUBANS AND THE NORTH KOREANS.

10. THE U.S. HAS AN INTEREST IN ENCOURAGING SURINAM'S BASICALLY MODERATE APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC QUESTIONS AND AN IMPORTANT STAKE IN THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL HARMONY HERE. IN ADDITION, OUR SUBSTANTIAL PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN THE BAUXITE SECTOR DICTATES THAT WE MAINTAIN A RELATIONSHIP WHICH ALLOWS CONTINUED ACCESS TO SURINAM'S BAUXITE RESERVES. OUR LOW-KEY APPROACH OF SYMPATHETIC CONCERN FOR THE DEMOCRATIC ASPIRATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT AIMS OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO BE WELL SUITED TO THESE INTERESTS.

11. THUS THE PICTURE IN SURINAM AFTER ONE YEAR OF INDEPENDENCE IS MIXED: PROMISE TEMPERED BY UNCERTAINTY, STABILITY WITHOUT THE UNIFIED BODY POLITIC THAT LONG-RANGE TRANQUILLITY REQUIRES. TO A LARGE EXTENT, THE GOS'S SUCCESS IN STRENGTHENING THE

NOTION OF BEING A SURINAMER WILL DEPEND UPON ITS EFFECTIVE-
NESS IN MAINTAINING THE PRESENT RELATIVE PROSPERITY AND IN
UTILIZING ITS DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES. SURINAM'S EXPERIMENT IN
NATION BUILDING COULD COLLAPSE JUST AS SO MANY OTHERS HAVE
DONE, BUT IT COULD ALSO PRODUCE A MODEL FOR OTHER MODERATE
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. IT IS THIS LATTER PROSPECT WHICH JUSTI-
FIES OUR INTEREST IN ITS WELFARE AND PROGRESS.
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